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DEVICES FOR TEACHING ORAL FRENCH

In the direct method of teaching French oral work holds an important place. How to lead the pupil to acquire a good pronunciation and some fluency in the use of the language is a problem, then, which must be solved by every teacher of French today. To obtain satisfactory oral work in the short time devoted to the language in our public schools, it is essential that the teacher make use of every good device at his command.

Pronunciation is the foundation of all oral work and should, therefore, from the first receive careful attention. For laying this foundation the value of phonetics is now very generally appreciated. Not only should pupils be made familiar with the different sounds in French, but they should also learn the exact position of the vocal organs in producing them and should have daily practice in making the sounds themselves. Great stress should be laid on the importance of the activity of the lips and on the changing of the positions of the speech organs in making those sounds which are not found in the mother tongue. With this constantly in mind the pupils should, under the direction of the teacher, train these organs. To aid in the work, there should be hung where all can see them a phonetic chart and a chart showing views of the mouth in making these sounds.

The phonetic transcript of the "Association Phonétique Internationale" is a valuable aid in training the ear and the organs of speech. It also enables the pupil to look up at home the pronunciation of any word of which he is in doubt. After only a few weeks' practice with the symbols the average pupil is able to give correctly the pronunciation of a great many words which he has never seen before. He is also able to give the spelling from the pronunciation. After all the sounds have been taught, there should be given every day during the first semester a few minutes drill in reading from charts specially prepared sentences, containing the sounds with which the pupils have difficulty. Pupils should be made familiar, by means of sound cards, with the different

groups of letters standing for each sound.¹ For example, they should learn by continual practice that *ê* (tête), *ei* (neige), *ai* not final (lait), *et* final (trajet), *e* when the last letter of a syllable and followed by a double consonant or by two consonants of which the first is *s* (verre, reste), are pronounced *ε* like the *e* in the English word *let*. A pupil who has a good ear and who excels in giving a certain sound as the French *u* may be appointed a watchman for that sound. Every time he hears it given incorrectly, he should immediately call attention to it, correct it, and then note, in a book for that purpose, the name of the pupil making it. In this manner incorrect sounds will be gradually eradicated.

After the first semester pupils should be tested at least once a month on pronunciation. A duplicate record of errors, with suggestions for correcting them, should be made regularly, the teacher keeping one, and the pupil the other.² With the suggestions before him, the pupil should practise reading aloud a few minutes each day until the next test when he is to receive other suggestions. Stress should be placed on the use of the mirror and sound cards for home work in correcting faulty pronunciation. Where a phonograph is available, much help in learning

1		<u>oe</u>
couleur	œuf	fleur
feuille	œillet	cueillir
œil		

²Slips taken from the duplicate record book of errors in pronunciation. Notes were made while the pupil read.

R. Matthews

Le 6 avril, 1915

s entre 2 voyelles = z. caserne
 e pas assez fermé: caserné
 ε obtint, main, pain, vint
 s maison, on, son
 oi = wa. voir
 er, final = e (é) flotter

E. Schillat

Le 8 avril, 1915

y muet, une, voulu, sûr
 e pas assez fermé: écouté, métier, année, dernier
 i dimanche
 ~ un
 œ (final) = ε
 et (pas final) = ε; pensait, restait
 ai Attention aux liaisons
 autre—au pas assez fermé

the intonation and grouping of words may be obtained by listening to the records. When those in authority realize that laboratory work for pronunciation is just as necessary as laboratory work in the natural sciences, this very essential and much neglected part of the teaching of modern languages will be given its proper place in the curriculum.

Not only should pupils be taught to use the phonograph in study, but they should also be encouraged to improve every opportunity of hearing spoken French, remembering that the training of the ear is of very great importance. In Germany it was formerly the custom of the school authorities to engage every year French and English reciters to present to both teachers and pupils selections which were to be taken up in class. While no such provision is made here, there are many French societies and churches which offer opportunities for hearing the spoken language.

Along with the work in phonetics should proceed the teaching of the grammar and vocabulary. The class room and the home furnish subjects for this work. The teacher should, in the first semester at least, see that the class is made familiar by means of objects or pictures, with the vocabulary and constructions found in the advance reading lesson. His home preparation of the reading lesson will then be only a review of what he has already learned by means of conversation in class. *Lectures Faciles*¹ is an excellent little book for oral work and reading in the first semester, and affords much interest and pleasure to the pupils. There should be constantly at hand on a large demonstration table, pictures or objects to represent every word of the vocabulary in this book. To save time the pictures could be arranged by lessons in large envelopes. Nothing should be read which has not been previously taught by means of these. Exceptionally bright pupils should be encouraged to add to this vocabulary. For example, one may wish to add to his list of fruits, another to his list of animals. The pupil should bring a picture of the animal or fruit he wishes to know and ask in French for the name, which should then be written on the back.

As it is the verb which plays the principal part in all oral and written work, this should be taught from the very beginning by

¹*Lectures Faciles* by Miss Bruce, D. C. Heath & Co.

means of conversation, in some such manner as that given in *Beginners' French*¹. When the pupils are able to give these sentences fluently, they should write them in their note books. After several verbs of the first conjugation have been taught in a similar way, dialogues should be written at home and then given in class. This dialogue work with the verbs should continue through all classes. In the second year's work it may consist of imaginary trips to the most interesting parts of France, to the market in a French city, to the large department stores of Paris. The best of these should be given in class.

Other tenses of the verb may be taught similarly. The pupils may tell what they *did* on their imaginary trip, what they *are going* to do on their next trip to Paris, what they *wish* to do on a trip to the French Alps. After the past indefinite has been taught, each pupil, for a week or more as he enters the class room, should tell the teacher at the door something which he did that morning. The following are sentences which were actually given in one class: "J'ai lavé la vaisselle ce matin." "Miss S— m'a grondé ce matin parce que j'ai parlé dans le corridor." Pupils enjoy this and try to give long interesting sentences. After this work has been thoroughly learned they may, instead of making statements, ask questions using the same tense. These often take the form of real necessary questions, as: "Mlle. F.—avez-vous mon cahier? Je l'ai laissé hier dans la salle de classe," "Mlle. F.—est-ce que vous avez trouvé la gomme que j'ai perdue ce matin?" "Savez-vous que le facteur a apporté 'Choses et Autres' ce matin?" Other tenses may be taught in a similar way. In teaching the subjunctive this oral work is especially valuable. There is nothing that seems more practical and worth while to the pupils than these few seconds of daily intimate conversation with the teacher.

Another interesting exercise for oral work is found in giving the different steps leading up to a completed article, as a loaf of bread, a pat of butter, a table. "The Story of a Piece of Bread"² may be taught first by means of pictures and then used as a model for further composition on other topics assigned. These

¹*Beginners' French* by Walter & Ballard, Scribners.

²Lesson XV, Fraser and Squair, *French Grammar for Schools and Colleges* D. C. Heath & Co.

stories may be written in the present, exchanged in class and transposed to the past, future, etc. Pupils may be asked to give the same, placing before each sentence "*Je désire que—*" or "*Il faut que—*" and similar verbs, thus showing the use of the subjunctive.

In the second semester of the first year, much drill on the troublesome conditional sentences should be given by means of such questions as "*Si vous vouliez aller à New York, que feriez-vous? Cet après-midi si vous aviez voulu aller à New York qu'auriez-vous fait?*" Likewise in teaching the subjunctive much oral work is necessary. Pupils might, for example, be asked to tell what the farmer *must* do in the spring, what they *wish* to do next summer, what they *fear* will happen when they travel on the water.

One of the best ways for teaching verbs is found in the method of François Gouin, the so-called Gouin series, in which the pupil gives all the steps leading up to the performance of a certain action, as the opening of a class room door. A good example is found on page 19 of *Beginners' French* by Walter and Ballard. In giving each expression directly with the action, the pupil learns little by little to think in French. A good assignment in connection with the series is a "A Trip to Paris." "A French School Day" is another example of work which may be done in connection with the series. By this it will readily be seen how useful knowledge of France and French customs may be taught in developing oral French, even in the first year. These series may be given in the past or future as well as the present and in any person. In the first few the teacher should help the pupil when he hesitates and should encourage him by such expressions, as: "*Très bien,*" "*A la bonne heure.*" He will soon learn these expressions and be able to use them himself.

As the imperative is constantly being used by the teacher, the pupils unconsciously become familiar with it. To become fluent they should, however, be called upon to give directions to individuals and to the whole class. As the verbs are used, they are written on the board by a pupil. After this other pupils name imperatives which have not been given. This is excellent work for the review of verb vocabulary. I recall having heard such imperatives as: *Ouvrez le livre. Fermez le livre, Jean.*

Levons-nous. Dites-moi le mot *thanks* en français. Dites-moi en français le proverbe "Tit for tat."

The present participle may be made a never-to-be-forgotten part of the verb by means of a simple game called "Je te jette mon gant" which is often played in France. A throws a glove to B saying, "Je te jette mon gant." B asks, "En quoi faisant?" A replies immediately, using *en* with a present participle, as "En parlant." B then throws the glove at once to another pupil while saying "Je te jette mon gant" and so the game continues. Anyone who hesitates or gives a present participle which has already been given must pay a forfeit. For a review of irregular verbs in advanced classes a verb game played in a similar way to "Authors," gives variety and stimulates oral work and the study of irregular verbs on the part of pupils deficient in these. A verb match at the end of each term is also enjoyed. Leaders are appointed and sides chosen. The first pupil on one side gives a verb as "vous saurez." The first pupil on the other side is asked in French by the pupil giving the verb to state the person, tense, and infinitive of this verb, as "Deuxième personne au pluriel du verbe *savoir*, to know." If he gives it correctly he has the privilege of giving the next on the other side, and so on. Every pupil who fails takes his seat. Another exercise is to see who can in one minute, give the infinitive of the greatest number of verbs beginning with a certain letter. The teacher says, for example, "e" and immediately calls "Mary." Mary gives just as fast as she can all infinitives she is able to recall beginning with *e*, as *écrire*, *élever*, *envoyer*, *enlever*, *effacer*, *égarer*. The number is taken down. Then another letter is given and a pupil called as before, and so on.

Another good exercise is to have a pupil give a noun and then call on a classmate for the corresponding verb, as: *l'écriture*, *écrire*; *le poids*, *peser*; *la demeure*, *demeurer*. Sometimes the verb may be given and the corresponding noun given, as: *allumer*, *lumière*.

Still another exercise is to have the pupil give a word and then call on classmates to give words belonging to the same family. Suppose the verb *voir* is given. Such words as *vue*, *visible*, *invisible*, *viser*, *visage*, *visite*, *visiter*, will be given. Sometimes

a word may be given and then its antonym¹ required, as: acheter, vendre; vieux, jeune. Sometimes the synonym may be called for, as: boutique, magasin.

From the first day, French should be spoken as much as practicable and should finally supplant the mother language. The first year the pupils might be taught the following:

1 In five minute general conversation each morning,

Bonjour	<div> <div> madame mademoiselle monsieur </div> </div>	Jean, va-t-il mieux ce matin? Oui, il va mieux à présent. Qu'avez-vous? J'ai mal à la tête. " " " " gorge. " " aux dents. " sommeil. " faim. " peur. " chaud. " froid.
Au revoir,	mademoiselle.	
Merci,	monsieur.	
Il n'y a pas de quoi,	madame	
Connaissez-vous cette personne?		"
Présentez madame à votre		"
classe.		"
J' ai l'honneur de vous présenter		"
madame D—.		"
Nous sommes enchantés de		
faire votre connaissance,		Ayez l'obligeance d'ouvrir la
madame.		porte.
S'il vous plaît.		Quel jour avons-nous aujourd'hui?
Plait-il?		Nous avons le trente novembre.
Pardon.		Quelle heure est-il?
Qui est absent?		Il est dix heures.
Comment allez-vous?		" une heure et demie.
Je vais très bien merci. Et		" onze heure moins quart?
vous?		Quel temps fait-il?
Comment va Mlle. S— cet		Il fait beau.
après-midi?		Il neige.
Elle ne va pas très bien aujourd'hui.		Il pleut.

¹*Antonimes de la langue française* by A. Muzzarelli, William Jenkins, 851-853 Sixth Ave., New York City.

2. In the lessons on pronunciation,

Prononcez bien.	Vous traînez sur l' <i>a</i> .
“ après moi.	Cette syllabe est longue.
“ correctement.	“ “ “ brève.
Vous ne prononcez pas bien.	Faites la liaison.
Vous prononcez mal les voyelles nasales.	Répétez ensemble.
Vous prononcez <i>on</i> comme <i>en</i> .	Parlez haut.
Vous accentuez trop cette syllabe.	“ lentement.
	Ne parlez pas si vite.

3. In the recitation and reading lesson,

Ouvrez votre livre à la page—	Asseyez-vous.
{ haut de la page.	Ecoutez attentivement.
Au { bas “ “	Répondez par une phrase complète.
{ milieu de la page.	
Levez-vous.	Récitez l'indicatif présent du verbe <i>donner</i> .
Commencez.	Réfléchissez avant de répondre.
Lisez.	Parlez à la classe.
Continuez.	Comprenez-vous?
Traduisez.	Oui, je comprends.
Epelez le premier mot.	Récite, toi.
“ “ deuxième mot.	Récitez, vous.
Restez debout.	C'est parfait!
Non, je ne comprends pas.	A la bonne heure!
Classe, demandez si vous ne comprenez pas.	Je suis très contente de vous.
Comment dit-on <i>book</i> en français?	Je vous donne une bonne note.
Qu'est-ce que c'est que cela?	Vous aurez une bonne note.
Je ne sais pas.	Vous avez bien travaillé!
Pourquoi n'avez-vous pas votre cahier?	Vous êtes très appliqué.
Levez la main.	Vous avez fait beaucoup de progrès.
	Ayez la bonté de ramasser les livres.
	Nous allons réciter la poésie.

4. In the written work,

Allez au tableau.	Les voyez-vous?
Donnez-moi un morceau de craie, s'il vous plaît.	Y a-t-il encore quelque chose à corriger?
Ecrivez le mot,—	Cherchez-moi un papier buvard.
Ecrivez la phrase,—	Quelle est la faute?
Faites attention.	Il n'y en a pas.
Vous ne faites pas attention.	Il a tort.
Ecrivez au crayon.	Il a raison.
Soulignez chaque faute.	Combien de fautes y a-t-il?
Comptez.	Il y en a deux.

After the first year the class should be conducted entirely in French. Even the names of the pupils may be given in French. Louis Carpenter, you may be sure, will be greatly pleased to be called Louis Charpentier and the other pupils will find no little enjoyment in calling him by that name outside of class. The environment should be made as nearly French as possible that it may in every way be conducive to oral work in the language. Maps with the names in French, plans of Paris, scenes representing French life, and French proverbs should adorn the walls. Collections of post cards, French periodicals, newspapers and letters received from pupils abroad should be placed where all may make use of them in planning oral work.

Throughout the course pictures should play an important part in furnishing subjects for conversation. The vocabulary books¹ are helpful in this work. For teaching French home life and customs one may use some such pictures as the finely colored wall pictures which accompany *La Première Année de Français* by F. B. Kirkman.² One is a domestic scene called "La Famille Pascal à Table" and another is a street scene called "La Porte Saint-Martin à Paris." The teacher designates with a pointer each object, gives its name, and when necessary, explanations as to its use. When the names of all objects in the picture have become perfectly familiar to the class, one pupil may do the questioning and the teacher may play the part of a visitor. One day a time-keeper may be appointed while another pupil

¹Art Institut, Orell Füssli. Libraires-Editeurs, Zurich, Suisse.

²Adam and Chas. Black, 4 Soho Square, London, W., England.

goes to the picture and names as many objects as he can in the time allotted. Another day verbs or adjectives suggested by the objects may be named. Still another day short sentences may be given. When the picture has been thoroughly studied, a story may be composed about it. Next, dialogues may be the assignment, conversation being suggested by the actions performed in the picture.

Topics for conversation may also be furnished by foreign correspondence. Each pupil should be ready to describe the city in which his correspondent lives. Some of the letters should be read and discussed in class. Questions which cannot be answered or topics on which pupils desire information should be noted and taken up in the following letter to the correspondent in the city mentioned. From time to time pupils might arrange programs consisting of short stories, anecdotes¹ and poems. The object is to do so well that the teacher, who has not seen the program, will understand every word that is given. The little magazine "Choses et Autres"² is very helpful to the pupils in this work.

Frequent illustrated talks on the history, literature, geography, customs and daily life of France should be given in French by the teacher. Let pupils in the fourth year take notes on these in French and reproduce them later in class. When all the pupils have by talks, readings, pictures and maps become more or less familiar with the principal streets, squares and monuments of Paris a game called "Connaissez-vous Paris"³ may be played.

After the first semester there should be much reading in class. At first the passage should be read aloud by the teacher. After the pupils have been questioned in French on the pronunciation, meaning of new words and construction, it should be read aloud by the pupils. In the first lessons especially, much attention should be given to the intonation and to the union of words of the same group. After a paragraph, or in some cases a page, has been read, the books should be closed and the class questioned in French on the content. These questions should be very short and simple at first. Sometimes a pupil who pronounces

¹Ballard's *Short Stories for Oral French*. Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York.

²Philadelphia Publishing Co., 1709 Chestnut St., Philadelphia.

³Wm. R. Jenkins Co., 851-853 Sixth Ave., New York.

well might ask the questions. *Lectures Faciles* has already been mentioned as a first reading book. Kirkman's *Première Année de Français*¹ is also excellent when used with the wall pictures which accompany it; its phonetic edition and lesson notes are valuable helps to the teacher. Two other good books published by the same company are: *Récits et Compositions d'après l'image* by M. Anceau and E. Magee, and *Lectures Illustrées*. The first, which has fourteen finely colored illustrations with corresponding text and exercises, costs 6d. The other, which has fifty-two illustrations, thirty-two of which are colored, costs 1s. 6d. An excellent book for beginners, published by The Macmillan Company, is the *Elementary French Reader* by Louis A. Roux. An old, but always interesting book for elementary classes, is *L'Abbé Constantin*. An intermediate class which saw this given at the French Theatre in New York last year chose it for sight reading.

An important place in the teaching of oral French should also be given to appropriate rhymes, poems, proverbs, quotations and songs.² From the first the value of these should be appreciated in the teaching of vocabulary, difficult constructions and verbs. The days of the week, the months of the year will not soon be forgotten if memorized in rhyme. The numerals to twelve may be taught by means of the little jingle, "Les Cerises." Even the older pupils are fond of the song "Au Clair de la lune,"³ which once memorized will fix in the mind the second singular of the imperative as in *prête-moi*, "ouvre-moi," "va" and the present indicative of *avoir*, *être*, *croire* and *battre*. "Sur le pont d'Avignon" will be especially interesting to pupils who are corresponding with pupils in Avignon. It may form first an interesting subject of conversation, for they have already heard much about it through letters read in class and the post cards which have been sent by correspondents. This song will be found very valuable in teaching names of different trades which of course should be discussed before the teaching of the song. In the advanced classes national hymns in connection with the "Historical Reader" and such songs as "Combien j'ai douce souvenance" preceded by a talk on Chateaubriand should be taught.

¹ Adam and Chas. Black, London, England.

² *A First Song Book* by R. B. Morgan and with notes by F. B. Kirkman, Adam and Chas. Black, 4 Soho Square, London, W., England.

³ *Chansons, Poésies et Jeux* by A. G. Gay. Wm. R. Jenkins Co., New York.

No poem in elementary classes should be memorized until it has been made perfectly clear by means of pictures and objects, and the story told by the pupils. Suppose the fable "Le Corbeau et le Renard" is to be taught. The story should first be told by the teacher as she points to the picture. She may then have it dramatized by two pupils, one taking the part of the crow and the other that of the fox. When every word is thoroughly understood the teacher should carefully read the poem, calling the attention of the pupils to the pronunciation and diction. Not until this has been accomplished should it be memorized. "Noël," which should be preceded by a talk on the celebration of Christmas in France and "La Marseillaise" after a talk on the French Revolution are both good for the second or third year.

Of all the many devices for teaching oral French there is one which stands out above all. It is that the teacher make use of the daily incidents of the class room, of the school building and of the home life, that he make French a real living language for his pupils by giving them daily practice in conversation and all kinds of oral work, from the first day of the course to the last. The result of such teaching has already been seen and the value of it recognized by educators in general.

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